

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 4, 2005****Contact:  
Nina Sims, DBA, (804) 371-0371****DBA's SOUTHWEST OFFICE OFFERS  
FULL SUPPORT TO BUSINESS COMMUNITY**  
*~ Ratliff joins Business Outreach Team ~*

**ABINGDON** – The Virginia Department of Business Assistance (DBA) today announced that the agency has rounded out support to business communities in southwest Virginia with the selection of Sandy Ratliff as the new Business Outreach Manager in the agency's Abingdon office which serves 22 localities in Southwestern Virginia. The office currently works with new and expanding businesses to offer workforce incentives and with the addition of Ratliff, will expand its offerings to include business program referrals, business startup assistance, community support services, and for qualifying businesses for agency loan products.

"The Department of Business Assistance is committed to delivering its full product line for businesses in Southwest Virginia," said DBA Director Mike Eisenman. "Sandy will also serve as a point of contact for the department's other research, technical assistance, and business development services.

Ratliff is a seasoned economic developer in the region with more than 15 years of service with the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority in Lebanon – most recently as their director of marketing.

Ratliff is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute through the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma and Virginia Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia.

"As a native of Southwest Virginia, I have seen first hand the challenges communities face to bring economic growth and stability to their citizens," said Ratliff. "I am excited to have this opportunity to support the economic development efforts of these 22 localities and look forward to many successful partnerships."

The Virginia Department of Business Assistance supports economic development in the Commonwealth by working with new and existing businesses to provide workforce incentives, loans, business information, incubator counseling, and educational opportunities for the business and economic development communities. DBA also administers the Virginia Business Information Center (VBIC), which provides answers and solutions to business related inquiries. VBIC can be contacted by calling (804) 371-0438, (866) 248-8814 (toll free), or by e-mailing [VBIC@DBA.VIRGINIA.GOV](mailto:VBIC@DBA.VIRGINIA.GOV).

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